

RESOURCES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 24 September 2019

Present: B Gibbs (Chairman)
D Dhillon, J Jordan, P Kelly and J Lowen-Cooper

Also Present:

Apologies for absence: S Chhokar

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the Resources PAG held on 12 June 2019 were approved.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Dillon declared an interest in Item 5, Inter Authority Agreement for Bucks County Council Legal Services. Nature of interest, Councillor Dillon was a Member of Bucks County Council.

Councillor B Gibbs declared an interest in Item 5, Inter Authority Agreement for Bucks County Council Legal Services. Nature of interest, Councillor Gibbs was a Member of Bucks County Council.

9. INTER AUTHORITY AGREEMENT FOR BUCKS COUNTY COUNCIL LEGAL SERVICES

Bucks County Council were moving from an outsourced arrangement for its legal services, currently provided by HB Public Law, to an in-house legal team to be in place by 1st October 2019. To assist with provision of the new in-house service and in view of local government re-organisation, an inter-authority agreement between each of the Districts and the County Council was proposed. This would be a collaborative exercise by the existing legal teams and arranged jointly. Any work done by the District teams would be recharged to Bucks County Council.

Members were advised that Chiltern and South Bucks Joint Legal Services staff would supervise the legal team providing advice and support on Bucks County Council property matters. The Head of Legal & Democratic Services confirmed that this would not impact adversely on business as usual for the Council's own legal work..

It was asked how the recharging would be calculated and the Head of Legal & Democratic Services was advised that officer time would be charged on a blended hourly rate adopting the approach currently used by HB Public Law.

Due to the urgency of implementing the Cabinet Member decision by 1 October, permission would be sought from the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to exempt the decision from call-in.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED** that South Bucks District Council enter into an Inter Authority Agreement with Chiltern District Council and Wycombe District Council, for the provision of legal services to Buckinghamshire County Council, from 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020. The Head of Legal & Democratic Services be authorised to agree the final terms and conditions of the IAA.

10. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT QUARTER 1 2019/20**

Members were asked to note the Treasury Management performance for Quarter 1 2019/20. It was advised that cash reserves were being held in short-term deposits as they would soon be carried over to the new authority and this would help the new management protocol. In paragraph 3.3 it could be seen that there were 2 identified investments available on call. There was no requirement for any additional borrowing.

The budgeted income from investments for 2019/20 had been set at £130,000 but would be monitored on a daily and monthly basis. The deferment decision for Gerrards Cross car park had reduced the cash outlay that would be required. Members enquired what would happen to any cash remaining at the end of the year and it was advised that these would go into the Unitary reserves. It was asked whether Consilio had any proposals and it was noted that the Shadow Authority would have to sanction any further acquisition plans.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

11. **WRITE OFF REPORT FOR THE 2018/2019 FINANCIAL YEAR**

A report had been requested on the Write Offs for 2018/19. Members considered the amount of write-offs to be high but it was explained that following the return of the service in-house, there was a large number of historical debts and it had taken time to go through these. Where there was a possibility of recovering the debts, they had been pursued but it was often not economical to do this.

It was noted that the tightening up of the procedures for temporary accommodation had reduced the write offs in this area as there was a requirement to claim housing benefit but this didn't always cover the full costs.

With regard to business rates, the explanation in paragraph 2.10 showed that a significant proportion related to sums in respect of 2 companies that had gone into liquidation.

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Penalty Notices were shown for 2018/19 but there was a request for figures for the last 5 years, so that the relative trends could be seen.

It was noted that the new Council would have less historical debt as it had been written off on the balance sheet. It was asked what the cost of the recovery project over 3 years had been and how much had been recovered and it was agreed to report the position to the next meeting. With so much historical data being included in this report, it was asked whether the forecast for 2019/20 would be much lower and it was agreed that that was the expectation. It was requested that targets be included in future reports for comparison.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting terminated at 7.03 pm